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**REGENTS STRESS ACADEMIC QUALITY AND NCAA COMPLIANCE IN
RECOMMENDING CHANGES TO ATHLETIC POLICY**

Baton Rouge - A task force formed to review the use of state funds in athletic programs at Louisiana's public universities today suggested updates and tightening of the 1991 state policy to focus on academic integrity, gender equity and NCAA compliance.

"This task force is updating our policy to reflect increased expenses in the area of gender equity and is working to ensure appropriate oversight in the area of compliance, but our primary focus is on academic quality," said Commissioner of Higher Education, Joseph Savoie.

Today's task force meeting is in response to resolutions passed in the Regular 2001 Legislative Session requesting the Board of Regents study its policy for state fund usage in athletic programs and the funding limits in order to provide greater discretion and flexibility to the public postsecondary education management boards and the institutions under their respective supervision. In addition, campuses had requested a Regent's review of gender equity costs.

Currently, the maximum state support allowed for an institution's athletic program is calculated according to a formula which includes a level of base support and the number of athletic scholarships allowed for each institution according to the institution's NCAA, JNCAA or NAIA classification.

Today's suggestions maintain the policy's primary purpose -- to limit the amount of funds that can be transferred from the operating budget into the athletic budget. However, additions and updates have been suggested to:

1. Provide greater flexibility in funding for gender equity to reflect actual program costs for facility development, equipment, supplies and the hiring of new coaches. Currently, only scholarship costs for women athletes are included in the fund calculation.
2. Clarify and account for the allocation of costs for positions that work in both athletic and non-athletic functions.

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ADD ONE
REGENTS STRESS ACADEMIC QUALITY

3. Require that the athletic compliance officer report directly to the institution's president/chancellor.
4. Institutions would be required to maintain campus accreditation, meet academic program accreditation requirements and maintain NCAA certification in order to participate in this policy and have access to state funds.
5. In addition to recommending updates to the fund usage policy, the task force also suggested additional in-state athletic competition.

"We would like to see more competition between in-state colleges and universities. After meeting conference scheduling requirements and high guarantee games, we are urging colleges to play other state schools," said Savoie.

During today's meeting the task force reviewed the athletic budget transfers of each public institution and determined that all are in compliance with the current policy. According to Regents 2000-2001 figures, athletic transfers in the state equaled \$20,370,040 – approximately 1.29% of the total education and general budget for Louisiana's colleges and universities.

Today's task force included members of the Board of Regents, system fiscal staff, campus presidents, faculty, athletic department representatives and campus fiscal staff.

The recommendation discussed at today's meeting will be sent in draft form to task force members for their review and comments. The final recommendations are expected to be presented to the Board of Regents during the May meeting.